

American

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Statement by President Obama on Bahrain

THE WHITE HOUSE
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Statement by the President on Bahrain

I welcome the announcement by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa about making important changes to the Cabinet and restating his commitment to reform. The United States supports the national dialogue initiative led by Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, and encourages a process that is meaningful, inclusive, non sectarian, and responsive to the people of Bahrain. The dialogue offers an opportunity for meaningful reform and for all Bahrainis to forge a more just future together. As a long standing partner of Bahrain, the United States continues to believe that Bahrain's stability will be enhanced by respecting the universal rights of the people of Bahrain and reforms that meet the aspirations of all Bahrainis.

Secretary Clinton Condemns Libyan Violence, Calls for Accountability

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called for Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi to be held accountable for opening fire on peaceful protesters and other violent acts that “violate international legal obligations and common decency.”

In remarks to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva February 28, Clinton said Qadhafi’s security forces have used “heavy weapons on unarmed civilians,” and that “mercenaries and thugs have been turned loose to attack demonstrators.”

“There are reports of soldiers executed for refusing to turn their guns on their fellow citizens, of indiscriminate killings, arbitrary arrests and torture,” she said.

Libya has been seized with civil strife that began with a nonviolent revolt against the government February 15. Now most of the eastern half of the North African nation is under the control of rebelling Libyans, and street fighting has spread to the borders of the Libyan capital, Tripoli.

Clinton commended the February 25 decision by the Human Rights Council to establish an independent commission of inquiry on the situation in Libya and praised the unanimous February 26 decision by the U.N. Security Council to adopt a resolution “imposing an arms

embargo on Libya, freezing the assets of key human rights violators ... and referring the Libyan case to the International Criminal Court.” She also applauded the Arab League for being the first multilateral organization to suspend Libya’s membership.

“The international community is speaking with one voice, and our message is unmistakable. These violations of universal rights are unacceptable and will not be tolerated,” Clinton said.

She called for the U.N. General Assembly to vote March 1 to accept the recommendation to suspend the Qadhafi government’s participation in the Human Rights Council. The secretary said the United States has imposed travel restrictions and financial sanctions on Qadhafi, his family and senior Libyan officials. She said the United States and its allies have joined the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and other nongovernmental organizations to set up a “robust humanitarian response” to the crisis.

“We all need to work together on further steps to hold the Qadhafi government accountable, provide humanitarian assistance to those in need, and support the Libyan people as they pursue a transition to democracy,” Clinton said.

She called on leaders in Libya and across the Middle East to hold free and fair elections, to cultivate a vibrant civil society that can hold the government accountable, and to make economic opportunity available to all.

“Without meaningful steps toward representative, accountable and transparent governance and open economies, the gap between people and their leaders will only grow, and instability will only deepen,” Clinton said.

She added that, ultimately, it will be the people of Libya who chart their own destiny and shape their new government, and she repeated the U.S. commitment to support the citizens and governments of the region “as they work for progress.”

United States Will Continue Full Effort on Farm Exports

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington – U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack says the United States will continue intensive promotion of its agricultural products around the world.

Vilsack said that in the first quarter of the U.S. fiscal year 2011, U.S. farm exports “were the highest that they have ever been,” and well on the way to a record based on a forecast from the department.

"We are very focused on exports, and we are doing it in a very strategic way," Vilsack said at the 2011 Agricultural Outlook Forum February 24.

In addition, Vilsack said the Obama administration is planning an "aggressive effort this spring to ensure that Congress takes quick action on passing the Korean Free Trade Agreement." Expanding free-trade agreements means greater exports for U.S. goods and services, he added, and it also means more U.S. jobs.

Every billion dollars in U.S. farm trade generates between 8,000 and 9,000 jobs in the farm sector, and when the United States produces more than \$135 billion worth of export trade, that translates into hundreds of thousands of workers employed in the off-the-farm economy, Vilsack said.

One of the sticking points between the United States and South Korea over a free-trade agreement has been that farm products sold in South Korea face "serious and significant tariffs, and this agreement will, over a period of time, eliminate most, if not all, of those tariffs," Vilsack said. It could expand access for American products in South Korea by \$1.8 billion annually, he added.

A South Korea free-trade pact also could increase attention on similar bilateral trade agreements with Colombia and Panama, which also are pending in Congress, Vilsack said.

These free-trade agreements and the Trans-Pacific Partnership are part of a broader plan by President Obama to promote his National Export Initiative. The initiative, over five years, will move the United States to a more balanced economy that is based equally on export trade and consumer-driven trade, Vilsack said.

"This is an enormously important thing that has to be done, and despite the challenges, despite the issues relative to supplies ... it's very, very important for us, particularly for our livestock industry, that we continue to promote these free-trade agreements," Vilsack told the forum.

The Agriculture Department's chief economist, Joseph Glauber, told the annual conference that farm trade is expected to hit record levels during 2011, driven by sharply higher values for grains, soybean and cotton.

Fiscal 2011 agricultural exports are forecast at a record \$135.5 billion, up \$9 billion from an earlier forecast and \$26.8 billion above 2010, Glauber said. Exports are expected to exceed the previous record set in 2008 by an estimated \$20.6 billion.

Glauber told the forum that U.S. farm imports are also

expected to grow in fiscal 2011, which began October 1, 2010, and ends September 30. During the year, agriculture imports are forecast to rise by \$2.5 billion to a record \$88 billion.

"Nearly half of imports are horticultural products while another 25 percent are sugar and tropical products such as cocoa, coffee and rubber," Glauber said.

The biggest market for U.S. agricultural exports in 2011 is China at approximately \$20 billion, which will surpass Canada at \$18.5 billion, he added.

"China is a major importer for a number of commodities, accounting for almost 60 percent of world soybean imports, 40 percent of world cotton imports and about 20 percent of total soybean oil imports," Glauber said. "These three commodities accounted for about three-quarters of total U.S. agricultural exports to China last year."

Cooperation, Intellectual Property Rights Support Innovation

By Charlene Porter
Staff Writer

Washington — Fostering and supporting innovation is a key message the U.S. government wants to convey to other nations as it prepares to host the annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) in Hawaii in November.

"Government policies can help create an environment conducive of innovation," said Under Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs Robert Hormats at a recent Washington meeting.

The climate to support innovation must include "good governance, transparent regulatory policies, markets that are open and competitive, and policies that allow companies to succeed and sometimes fail," Hormats said. Protection of intellectual property rights is another key element to nurture innovation, giving creative thinkers incentive to develop their ideas.

The State Department official spoke at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Washington February 17-21.

Thousands of scientists, engineers, policymakers, educators and journalists from some 50 nations attended the meeting of the organization, known as the AAAS.

"Innovation networks" formed by corporations, their customers, suppliers and associated universities and government agencies are a new trend for the development of products that build on the inventions and

successes of each partner.

“Nations that fail to protect intellectual property will find themselves cut off from these dynamic global partnerships,” Hormats said, “because innovative firms will hesitate to invest in or form partnerships with countries where their intellectual property may be stolen.”

The United States is working to expand its involvement with Asian nations in science and technology pursuits. Hormats said agreements for expanded cooperation in science and technology have been forged with nine Asian nations.

A top AAAS official also spoke at the meeting about science as a platform for international engagement. Alice Huang said U.S. capabilities in these disciplines give the nation great credibility in the pursuit of science diplomacy.

For the United States to succeed, she said, “we need to avoid arrogance and Western-centric views, and behave as true partners in advancing international science as well as the welfare of all citizens.”

Huang said scientific diplomacy can occur at many levels – between individuals or institutions – and it can be especially valuable when official diplomatic relationships may be strained or limited.

As host of the 2011 APEC meeting, the United States will be urging member nations to identify the next generation of issues that should be included in a 21st century trade agreement.

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